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FUTURE IMMIGRATION

BY FRANCES KELLOR

THE passage of the law, operative for a period of a little more than one year, which limits immigration to 3 per cent of the number recorded under the 1910 census, marks a new era in immigration legislation. Its significance lies less in the fact that it provides against an emergency created by numbers than that it ignores the traditional conception of the United States as an asylum for the oppressed and persecuted peoples of the world. An amendment exempting political refugees was proposed in the House and passed. An amendment exempting refugees from religious persecution was proposed in the House and defeated. The Senate declined to adopt either of the proposed exemptions, so we may conclude that, after mature deliberation, the policy of this country is now shorn of a loose idealism which practice has often belied. The country, by this law, places immigration on a wholly economic basis and makes its affairs international in their future practical operation.

This modification of American tradition and law is the culmination of profound changes which have been taking place almost unnoted in our American life. These changes have altered our conception of our country to the extent that we now believe it to be economically independent of immigration in the sense that industries and production can proceed unhampered without it. It is a question now of the pace, rather than of the necessity. The question of a labor supply to develop industry has thus become subsidiary to the larger economic questions of international commerce and finance from which immigration seems likely to be inseparable in the future. This tendency is increased by the fact that the United States has become an emigration as well as an immigration country. Once the flow of immigration is established on fairly even terms in both directions,

economic laws alone will prevail, modified only in such ways as the political and social concepts may determine.

It will help us to understand how these modifications have taken place, if we recall the conditions of immigration before the war. The early immigrant heard stories of conquest and of fabulous wealth to be had for the seeking, and the spirit of adventure lured him from his native country. Leaving his native land was a simple affair. He sold his property, "packed up his family," and left. These pioneers were followed by the more cautious ones, who awaited assurances of the success of their predecessors. Later, immigration depended largely upon prepaid tickets and definite promises of work or assistance. In this way, immigration became first a racial matter, and then, later, almost a family affair. To-day, practically 80 per cent of all immigrants travel on prepaid tickets, their departure having been stimulated, and their reception and distribution managed, through racial channels.

This ascendancy of a racial system of selection and assimilation occurred because the desire of the American immigrant to bring over his relatives and friends, and their willingness to come, fitted the policy of the foreign Governments whose nationals they were. European countries were flush with population. They seemed fairly secure in their power. They had men to spare, and when their subjects did not like conditions in their own countries their emigration was encouraged. It was reckoned more profitable to expedite the emigration of rebellious or ambitious subjects than to provide educational facilities, to grant lands, to increase economic opportunities, or to abolish class distinctions. The only effective barriers were those erected by countries of immigration. These were set up as the result of violent contests carried on between those who wanted immigration and those who were opposed. Countries of origin regarded such contests with indifference, if not detachment, since the individual immigrant was primarily the person affected.

But the war upset the system and set Europe thinking. Some of the countries involved in the war found a considerable percentage of their fighting forces in other lands or in alien armies. Many of their emigrants did not respond when the recall was

sounded. Even the spirit of sacrifice, when measured by relief funds and service, did not meet the expectations of the native land. This experience, when viewed in connection with the prospect of future wars, of slow economic rehabilitation, and of the instability of the Governments of some of the new nations, has created doubts about the wisdom of continuing pre-war immigration policies. Then, too, the problems facing Europe in securing foreign markets, in enlarging fiscal policies, together with the fear of American economic power, are making European Governments exceedingly reluctant to contribute gratuitously an adult population to build up a greater America. The emigrant is now regarded as an asset that can be used to advantage in the international economic struggle.

But the war also set the American thinking more seriously about immigration. His experience with alien enemies, his discovery through war activities of the persistence of racial traits, his realization of the delay in Americanization, and his closer acquaintance with racial colonies, societies and press, are transforming racial detachment into positive antagonism. His faith in automatic assimilation has given way to apprehension. He, too, has become distrustful of the wisdom of past immigration policies.

This distrust is the background of the present demand for the suspension of immigration. It accounts for the willingness of the American to believe that millions of immigrants are coming to this country, even when it has been shown that the capacity of steamships will limit the number to less than a million a year. Instead of accepting facts, the American constructs phantom ships. This distrust is the basis upon which new laws are enacted. These laws are intended to safeguard the country from "undesirables" even when the immigration law already excludes them. This distrust explains the panic over typhus at a time when the quarantine law, under Presidential proclamation, could have been invoked to suspend all immigration from all areas where disease prevails. Always on the defensive and inclined strongly toward restriction, the American has now come to regard restriction if not suspension of immigration as a national necessity.

With both America and Europe in favor of curtailing emigration, it would seem that the policies would be in harmony. But, unfortunately, the spirit of retaliation and the desire of countries to take advantage of each other are the motives behind the policies. When Americans talk percentage restriction, it is with the intention of "skimming the cream off the populations of Europe." When Europeans talk about curtailment they have in mind capitalizing their emigration for purposes of national rehabilitation or for international trade expansion. An attempt on America's part to handpick immigrants in a stranger's garden will meet with the same reception as an attempt on the part of European countries to withhold their nationals from American naturalization and assimilation. The misunderstanding which will arise from such efforts will be concerned less with the amount of immigration than with the status of aliens in the various countries.

The American attitude of mind is not especially disposed to regard the immigrant as an international human being. Neither is it concerned with much more than numbers. Proceeding upon the assumption that this country will continue to be a favored one for immigration, the American sees no need to change the national policy of dealing with the individual immigrant. He reasons that thirteen millions foreign-born people, and as many more whose ancestors were born abroad, will supply this country with more immigrants than it needs; that the vast areas of uncultivated lands, the thousands of deserted farms, and the regions not reached by railways and as yet undeveloped by irrigation are a sufficient attraction for future immigrants. He thinks the aspirations of American business men to increase production and develop markets will maintain wage rates and standards of living which for many years to come will be the envy of Europe. He believes the American form of government to be superior to any other and that men who are satisfied with economic conditions in their native countries will, nevertheless, come to America to obtain liberty, equality and fraternity. He sees nothing but an unlimited supply of immigrants and believes that all this country needs to do is to open or close its doors at will. To him it is unthinkable that there will not always be a long waiting list.

But evidences are accumulating which indicate that this position is not as tenable as before the war. The census figures for 1920 have proved a great surprise. They show that in the past decade, the gain in population from immigration has been but 2.6 per cent, or about 358,442: an average gain of 30,000 per year. During that period the immigration reports show that 5,715,811 immigrants entered the country, and 2,174,123 returned. In other words, for every two immigrants who entered, approximately one returned, giving this country a turnover in its immigrant population of 50 per cent. There is also an unknown quantity to be accounted for. If the gain was but 358,442, the question is what became of the three million who are not included in the increase or in the departures.

The European attitude of mind, on the other hand, is tending steadily in the direction of international coöperation. There are many new questions which seem to have no method of solution except through international agreement; there are many prevailing practices in individual countries which are viewed with disquietude. For instance, the American practice of regarding races as equally desirable, while characterizing certain immigrants as unwelcome, does not carry with it an assurance of confidence to countries vitally concerned with the success of their emigrants. Such nations would prefer a more definite understanding with this country. Then, too, countries having a large emigration have long regarded, as a matter for future adjustment, the waste and exploitation inherent in an immigration based upon individual impulse and initiative. Their statesmen have followed the history of emergency legislation in the United States with a good deal of care, and many of them have about reached the conclusion that they cannot afford to depend upon the United States as the chief future outlet for their surplus population. They regard the intelligent placement of manpower by the Government as part of a national economic policy, as a matter of far too great importance to the native country for individual immigrants to continue to roam about the world at will.

How fast or how slowly this state of mind will operate to change the conditions under which emigration will take place depends upon European conditions now in process of adjustment. That

changes in immigration policies will accompany, rather than wait upon, such adjustments is everywhere apparent. Many countries are improving working and living conditions, distributing land, granting political freedom, improving educational facilities, creating new opportunities with the intention of keeping emigrants at home. They are making provision with equal care for emigration where that is advisable.

In accordance with the belief that its immigrants were not especially desired by the United States, Italy has issued a decree suspending immigration to the United States. It took similar action with regard to Brazil a number of years ago, when conditions of settlement in that country were unsatisfactory. It is now perfecting negotiations with South American countries and Mexico to receive immigration; and a commercial corporation, endorsed by the Government, is being organized to handle its distribution in a businesslike way. Sweden has a semi-official anti-emigration society which is having a marked effect, not only in decreasing emigration, but also in inducing many Scandinavians in the United States to return home. In certain European countries, where the Canadian Government has sought to reestablish its colonization offices which existed before the war, it has been informed that no stimulation of emigration will be welcomed, as the policy is now definitely against emigration.

But not less significant than these nationalist movements are the international agreements now being negotiated in Europe. The object of such treaties is to locate the surplus population of one country in a country that needs labor, under conditions that will not prove burdensome to either. Such treaties possess the advantage of locating nationals within immediate call in case of war, and of providing living conditions which keep them fit.

Typical of them is the treaty between Czecho-Slovakia and France, under date of March, 1920. These Governments mutually agree to grant all administrative facilities to citizens of each country and their families who repair to their countries for labor purposes, as well as for repatriation. It also authorizes the collective registration of workmen. It provides in general that immigrant workmen, for equal labor, shall receive the same rate of pay as nationals in the same category, and that they will

enjoy the same protection accorded to native workmen. It provides for the payment of pensions, indemnities and compensation for injuries upon terms as satisfactory to foreign as to native born workmen. Inspectors and correspondents who speak the language of the immigrant workmen are to be employed by the country of domicile to see that these provisions are carried out. No especial authorization is required for nationals either to enter or leave the country of domicile. But they may secure a contract of registration, in which case they will be directed to their destination and may receive free shelter and care *en route*. These centres will also provide employment. If employment is unobtainable the native Government will be advised and provision will be made for their return. Under organized registration, the two Governments fix by common accord the number and category of workmen who will be the object of registration in a way not to harm either the economical development of the country or of the workmen. A joint commission meets at least once a year to determine the number and kind of immigrants, the transportation, sanitary protection and other measures necessary to their transfer. Registration is effected through the central labor office and careful inquiry is made into conditions in establishments in the country applying for labor in another country, as to strikes and lockouts and labor agitation. Approved demands for labor are then transmitted through diplomatic channels to the country where registration is to take place. The conditions under which the savings of immigrants may be transferred to the savings banks of the native country are prescribed.

But it has remained for the League of Nations, through the International Emigration Commission of the International Labor Office, to indicate the trend of European immigration policies. By means of a questionnaire, and the appointment of a correspondent in each country, including our own, this Commission proposes to discuss at the session August second and report its findings at the Fall meeting of the League of Nations, concerning the following questions:

Of ensuring, by agreement between the countries of emigration, of transit and of immigration, the best application of the national laws by coöperation between different countries; of simplifying and unifying the formalities to be

accomplished in the different countries as regards the entry and departure of migrants, so as to ensure their full efficacy with a minimum of inconvenience to those concerned; of ensuring to immigrants recourse to efficacious tribunals with the services of competent professional advisers, interpreters, assistants.

. . .

The elimination of agents interested in promoting emigration, and their replacement by competent public officials entrusted with furnishing information to future emigrants; the creation of national systems of labor exchanges and information offices in the countries of emigration and immigration; the abolition of the system of "Padroni" and the institutions exploiting immigrant workers; the protection of emigrants handicapped by their ignorance of the national language and methods of work.

But of the greatest significance is the proposal to determine if the International Labor Office is to be entrusted with the following tasks:

Adjusting, if possible, the difficulties which may arise in regard to questions of emigration of workers between countries of immigration and emigration; studying the means of coördinating, in agreement with the governments concerned, the legislation of different nations so as to reduce the points of unnecessary friction; ensuring the application of the measures of an international character which the Governments may deem proper to establish by common accord with a view to the satisfactory working of their national laws concerning migrations; protecting immigrants who are not entitled to consular protection; supervising the application of the international conventions which may be concluded relating to the recruiting of workers in foreign countries; coöperating in the organization of labor exchanges for immigrants and emigrants; and establishing systems of recording international statistics of emigration.

With this trend of thought, it can only be a question of time when the immigration treaty and international conference and joint Commission will be presented to this country as a means of solving some aspects of immigration hitherto but hardly considered. As our forefathers framed consular treaties to enable the young country to grow; as they adopted commercial treaties to enable the new country to prosper; as they framed naturalization conventions to enable the ambitious country to protect its citizens all over the world; so we to-day may frame immigration treaties which will enable this country, still young, to safeguard a future inseparably linked with the past of many peoples from European lands.

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